

1. Shopping for Free – the “Nibbāna Market”

In the Dazaunmon Month (တန်ဆောင်မုန်းလ) you may see in villages and esp. towns what is called “Nibbāna Market” (နိဗ္ဗာန်ဆေး). Why is it called Nibbāna is little bit mystery to me, but most probably it is because all the “sold” goods are “sold” for free.

In the beginning, the people who will participate in this ‘run’ will gather at a certain place, make a queue, and one by one will receive tickets with numbers. Each of the ticket points to a certain stall where are already waiting volunteering ‘sellers’. There are however many such stalls, let’s assume about 50, 100. But the person standing in the first queue will receive a single ticket only, with a single random number. These stalls are also not mapped at all – so the ‘customer’ will run here and there around the village or a town quarter, searching for the stall of his number. He comes to that stall, and gets one single thing – a soap, a packet of uncooked rice, a washing liquid, etc. If he wishes, he will obtain another ticket right at that stall. That ticket of course also contains number, and our poor customer will run here and there again – to find his new destination. In this manner the people are going here and there and searching for stalls with the right number, spending thus great amount of time just walking. And believe it or not – it is this running, which greatly reduces number of the participants and the number of stalls the visit, and thus also the goods they receive. Maybe this is also called “Nibbāna Market” because many people “give up their attachment”, and realize that there is a lot of peace in detachment from craving.

There are also special places where people are offered rice or sweet drinks (not with a number). These places are arranged not only during Dazaunmon, but also during various other occasions. Because people from any direction (North, East, South, West,) are welcome to come and have the meal or drink, these places are called “*satuditha*” (စတုဒိသာ, “four directions”).



Queue for tickets.



Those who attend the queue gain some rice and oil together with their first ticket.



A stall. Note the white card with number in the background.



Another stall. Note the little cards with a number in the background.



Tickets of Nibbāna Market.



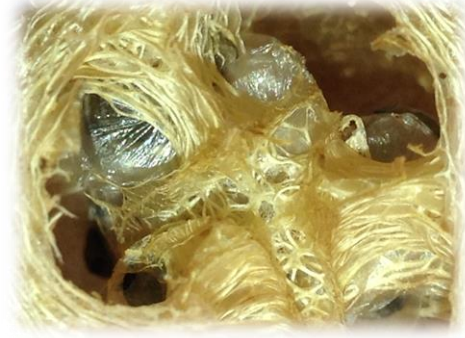
Free distribution of rice to people coming from any direction.

2. 'Tangle' indeed : the Burmese Natural Washing Sponge

Burmese culture is very rich in utilization of natural resources, whether we talk of big things or small things. One of such 'utilizations' is the use of thabo-u (သပွင့်အူ). Myanmar-English Dictionary published by Myanmar Ministry of Education, explains: "stringy mass of fibres from the dried fruit of the sponge gourd (*Luffa pentandra*) used as a sponge or scourer." And indeed, what we have here is a completely natural alternative to the plastic sponges. I was offered a number of specimens by my supporter Ma Hsu Yee Mon, and you may therefore see it. Myanmar people also recognize the entangled feature of this fruit, and if they want to express how complicated (entangled) is a problem, they will say it is as entangled as the sponge gourd.



Sponge gourd with the seeds that it bears.



The sponge gourd from close up.

3. The false Lower-Left-Tooth-Relic in Kaunghmudaw Pagoda (quotes)

1. {Truth Unrevealed} Thirteen miles to the south-west of Mandalay is the town of Sagaing on the west bank of the Irrawaddy. This also is an early capital and there are seven or eight ancient pagodas of great beauty and interest dating from some 500 years ago. Among these the most famous is the

Rajamanicula Kaunghmudaw Pagoda, erected by King Thalun Mintara in 2180 B.E. (1636 C.E.). In this pagoda is enshrined a Tooth of the Buddha, a relic presented by Dhammapala, the then king of Lanka (Ceylon).

(from "The_Light_of_the_Dhamma_Vol-03-No-01-1955-06.pdf")

2. {Truth Unrevealed} A few miles to the north of the town is the Kaunghmudaw (Rajamanicula) pagoda built by King Thalun in 1636 on the model of the Mahaceti pagoda of Ceylon in commemoration of the re-establishment of Ava. The shrine composed of three circular terraces and a gigantic dome towers to a height of 151 feet. It enshrines the tooth relic of Buddha brought from Ceylon and attracts the veneration of the masses. A marble inscription, 8.5 feet high, which records the details regarding the erection of this pagoda is well preserved in a Masonry shed on the platform.

(from "Historical Sites in Burma (Aung Thaw) (OCRed).pdf")

3. {Truth is Revealed} The Mahazedi originally contained a Buddha tooth, at one time thought to be the most sacred of all Buddha relics, the tooth of Kandy, Sri Lanka. After Bago was conquered in 1539, the tooth was moved to Taungoo and then to Sagaing near Mandalay. Together with a begging bowl supposed to have been used by the Buddha, it remains in the Kaunghmudaw Paya ([Click here](#)), near Sagaing, to this day.

(from "Lonely Planet Myanmar (Burma) (Travel Guid - Lonely Planet.pdf")

4. {Truth is Revealed} Mahazedi Pagoda F [map], to the west of the Shwethalyaung Buddha, is famous in Myanmar as the place where King Bayinnaung enshrined a gold- and jewel-encrusted tooth of the Buddha to confirm the divine appointment of his reign. He had bought it from the King of Colombo on the understanding that it was the original, and much revered, Tooth of Kandy, but the relic turned out to be nothing of the kind. Undeterred, Bayinnaung locked the tooth away in the Mahazedi Pagoda, where it remained until 1599, when Anaukpetlun transferred it to his capital, Taungoo. A short time later, King Thalun built the Kaunghmudaw Pagoda in nearby Sagaing to house the relic, where it can still be seen today. The Mahazedi Pagoda was destroyed during Alaungpaya's time, and levelled again by the 1930 earthquake. With the reconstruction work recently completed, the uppermost walkway around the stupa affords a marvellous view of the surrounding plain.

(from "Insight Guides_ Myanmar (Burma) - Insight.pdf")

5. {Truth Unknown} According to local lore, the relic chamber of the pagoda contains the lower left tooth relic of the Buddha, 11 hair relics, an alms bowl, statues, pagodas and other relics.

{There ought to be similar wealth of relics also in Shwezigon Pagoda of Bagan.}

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kaunghmudaw_Pagoda

4. Tipiṭaka Pāli Slabs of Kuthodaw Pagoda and Sandamuni Pagodas (quotes)

1. But the circuit is a lōṇī[^][?] one, and we may turn from the western door of the Kutho-daw to the Sanda-Muni Pagoda, facing- the north-east end of the city. The site is historic.

(from "Mandalay, and other cities of the past in - O'Connor, V. C. Scott (Vincent Clarence Sc.pdf")

2. Also at the foot of the Hill, near the Kyauktawgyi pagoda, are the huge marble slabs, 729 of them, on which are inscribed the Tipiṭaka Texts (the Buddhist Canon) as authorised by the Fifth Great Buddhist Council, held in Burma in 1861 C.E. They are enshrined at Kuthodaw Pagoda built in 1857 by King Mindon. **The inscriptions of Aṭṭhakathās (Commentaries) are in the dagobas around the Sandamuni (Candāmuṇi) Pagoda which is situated not far from the Kuthodaw Pagoda.**

(from "The_Light_of_the_Dhamma_Vol-03-No-01-1955-06.pdf")

3. THE WORLD'S BIGGEST BOOK - Around the gilt-and-gold stupa of mid-19th-century Kuthodaw Paya (Maha Lawka MarazeinPaya; Click here; admission \$10 combo ticket; 24hr), you'll find 729 text-inscribed marble slabs, each housed in its own small stupa and together presenting the entire 15 books of the Tripitaka. **Another 1774 similarly ensconced marble slabs (collected in 1913) ring the nearby Sandamuni Paya (admission free; 8.30am-5pm) with Tripitaka commentaries.**

Collectively these slabs are often cited as the 'World's Biggest Book'. Producing the Kuthodaw set

alone required an editorial committee of over 200. When King Mindon convened the 5th Buddhist Synod here he used a team of 2400 monks to read the book in a nonstop relay. It took them nearly six months to finish.

(from "Lonely Planet Myanmar (Burma) (Travel Guid - Lonely Planet.pdf")

4. Sandamuni Pagoda - To the east of the Kyauktawgyi temple, the Sandamuni Pagoda D [map] (daily 8am–5pm; charge) was built on the site of King Mindon's temporary palace where he resided while the main walled complex was under construction. It was erected over the burial place of Mindon's younger brother, Crown Prince Kanaung, who was assassinated in an unsuccessful palace revolution in 1866. **Commentaries on the Tipitaka (Buddhist scripture) have been chiselled into 1,774 stone tablets housed in the pagoda, a work credited to the monk U Khanti.**

Kuthodaw Pagoda - Further to the east, at the base of Mandalay Hill's southeast stairway and surrounded by a high wall, is Mindon's Kuthodaw Pagoda E [map] (daily 8am–5pm; charge). Its central structure, the 30-metre (100ft) -high Maha Lawka Marazein stupa, built in 1857, was modelled on the Shwezigon Paya in Nyaung U, near Bagan. The 729 whitewashed pagodas that surround it were erected in 1872 during the Fifth Buddhist Synod to individually house the marble tablets upon which, for the first time, the entire Tipitaka was recorded in Pali script, veneered with gold leaf. When first unveiled, it took 2,400 monks six months to recite the text, which is often dubbed "the world's largest book". The Kuthodaw Pagoda was comprehensively plundered during the annexation of 1885. British looters stripped the stupa of its precious stones, peeled the gold leaf from the pagoda, carried off 6,570 brass bells from the subsidiary stupas, disfigured statues and used the stone zayat tablets of the Tipitaka to build a military road. It took over a decade to repair the damage.

(from "Insight Guides_ Myanmar (Burma) - Insight.pdf")

5. The Sandamuni Pagoda is located to the southeast of Mandalay Hill and bears a resemblance to the nearby Kuthodaw pagoda because of the large number of slender whitewashed ancillary stupas on the grounds. **The Sanda Muni Paya also features 1774 marble slabs which include the commentaries and sub-commentaries on the Tipitaka, the Three Baskets of Buddha's teachings. It is very similar to Kuthodaw pagoda but they are much closer to each other and I liked this pagoda more.**

http://www.tripadvisor.com/ShowUserReviews-g295408-d1912490-r204175101-Sanda_Muni_Paya-Mandalay_Mandalay_Region.html#

The conclusion is that there are marble slabs around the Sandamuni Pagoda, which contain Pali commentaries. The difficulty here is, that the Burmese are not aware of it – or at least cannot

grasp this fact in this way. Sayadaw U Vajirapāṇī called to a monk who is responsible for a monastery right next to the Kuthodaw Pagoda and asked, whether there are (near or far) any other Tipitaka marble slabs apart from Kuthodaw. The monk said there are none, all are at the Kuthodaw pagoda, and Sandamuni Pagoda is just the name of a pagoda that is in the Kuthodaw compound. From the “D map” of Insight Guides – Myanmar, we however know well that the Kuthodaw compound and Sandamuni compound are divided by a street, and that each of the compounds have their respective pagoda and separated set of marble slabs.

5. Parts of Mandalay – the Old Terms Survived

These are still used, and the way you can understand them is such:

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| 1. <i>Shwemyodaw</i> (ရွှေမျှတော်) = the Royal Golden Palace | |
| 2. <i>Ashepyin</i> (အရှေ့ပြင်) = The Eastern Suburb | 4. <i>Myaukpyin</i> (မြောက်ပြင်) = The Northern Suburb |
| 3. <i>Anaukpyin</i> (အနောက်ပြင်) = The Western Suburb | 5. <i>Taungpyin</i> (တောင်ပြင်) = The Southern Suburb |

There is also another way of distinguishing, which survived until today:

A) *Kyoe Tar Nay Nimeit* (ကြိုးတား နယ်နိမိတ်) = The town of the townsfolk.

B) *Kyong Tar Nay Nimeit* (ကျိုးတား နယ်နိမိတ်) = The royal court and residence.

Kyoe Tar means “measured by ropes”, and it indicates the way how different lands were measured for the king’s ministers. The ministers were thus responsible for each of their quarters delimited by rope. *Kyong Tar* means “measured by moat”, and it indicates the king’s court and palace, which are surrounded by moat. *Nay Nimeit* just means the borders of the division.

6. Ladies spread hair over the path where a sayadaw is coming, so that the sayadaw steps on it.

Ladies usually spread their “*mukha puñjana cola*” (= “face-wiping cloth”) at the time when a monk is coming to do Dhamma preaching, which is either their *yogi tabet* (ယောဂီ တဘတ်) (“yogi towel”, or if you will “yogi shawl”), or their sitting cloth for meditation. The idea that they spread their hair on the path of a monk coming for Dhamma teaching is not very common – Sayadaw U Vajirapāṇī says that it is done so mostly in the jungle monasteries, especially after a person becomes ordained as a monk.

The belief here is that if a person is touched by a monk (who is preferably keeping *mettā* mind) will be blessed and free from displeasure. Monks, however, are not supposed to stand on

the hair, and most of the time they will avoid touching that hair (making a big step across). (Note, that if a monk touches woman's hair with lust, he will have a very serious offense against Vinaya, the monk's discipline, of which 'curing' involves a week or more of penance. Also note, that if a monk touches that hair with a sisterly/motherly love, he will have a minor offence.) It is more common that a mother will take her new-born child and prepare it lying on that path where a monk is going to cross. She hopes that the monk will touch the child and thus bless it. Sayadaw U Vajirapāṇī shared with me that the Tipiṭakadhara Yaw Sayadaw has encountered this several times, and instead of touching, he crosses making a big step, sometimes saying aloud "well, may you be healthy, may you be healthy!".

7. Shwe Yat Taw Monastery/Buddha in Mandalay?

There is a statue of the (Standing) Predicting Buddha (ဗျာဒိတ်ညွန့်ဘုရား [Byadeit Phayar]) pointing with His hand to the Mandalay Palace. This statue has its story - when the Buddha came to this place during His life, an ogress cut off her breast and offered it to the Buddha. The Buddha then predicted that she will be born as a king of the place and protect the Buddha's religion. The ogress then in a next life became the king Min Don. Because the king Min Don lived in the Mandalay Palace, the Standing Buddha was sculptured as pointing His hand to the Mandalay Palace, to depict His prediction. The statue is still there and the story is well known. Note that there is a similar statue of Predicting Buddha in Bagan's "Byadeit Pay Hsu-Taung Pyi Zedi" (ဗျာဒိတ်ပေး၊ ဆုတောင်းပြည့်စေတီ။).

8. Paṭhamakyaw

Before the English invaded Myanmar and started to destroy the examination system here, the examinations for novices consisted of reciting the memorized texts (nowadays most of the exams are only written). The examination at that time followed after *Pathama Kyi* (even today, the main examinations for novices are *Pathama Ngay* (ပဌမငယ်), then *Pathama Lat* (ပဌမလတ်), and *Pathama Kyi* (ပဌမကြီး)). After *Pathama Kyi* a novice could decide for the *Pathama Kyaw* (ပဌမကျော်) and also *Dhammācariya* (ဓမ္မာဝရိယ). During the English period this was not possible, and after the English period this examination became extinct. **Today the novice who passes *Pathama Kyi* as the best of all, automatically receives the title of *Pathama Kyaw*.** There is no other way to gain title *Pathama Kyaw* today.

Note that there is another exam called *Sāmane (Thāmane) Kyaw* (သာမဏေကျော်), which is completely different. *Sāmane Kyaw* examination is held and arranged by knowledgeable sayadaws completely separately from the government-held *Ngay-Lat-Kyi-Dhammācariya*. In *Sāmane Kyaw*

there are completely different rules, different questions, and the content of the examined text is also somewhat different. For *Dhammācariya* is required knowledge of *Vinaya Piṭaka*, *Dīgha Nikāya*, *Dhammasaṅgaṇī*, their commentaries, and *Abhidhammatthasaṅgaha*. In *Sāmane Kyaw* it is *Vinaya Piṭaka*, *Aṅguttara Nikāya*, their commentaries, *Dhammapada* stories, and *Abhidhammatthasaṅgaha*. The difference is however more important in the questioning system.

May all beings be happy,

Monk Sarana

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